

At-A-Glance: Recent Research Findings

New Method for Monitoring Crack Use

*K. Jack Riley, Natalie T. Lu, et al.,
“Monitoring the Crack Epidemic
Through Urine Testing: Establishment
of Routine Detection Methods,”
Addiction Biology, (2001): 83–95.*

Today, a lab technician testing an arrestee’s urine sample for cocaine use would not be distinguishing between use of crack or powder cocaine. That may soon change. Staff of the National Institute of Justice and Pharm-Chem Laboratories (PCL) have recently reported new findings from a project to detect crack use through urinalysis. The study also involves comparing urine tests with users’ self-reports.

Crack is considered by some to be a more dangerous drug than powder cocaine. In addition to being highly addictive, crack is associated with a multitude of social, economic, and health problems. Crack addicts have high rates of tuberculosis, HIV, and other diseases. Seeing the potential for greater social harm, Federal legislators have set more severe punishment for crack use and trafficking than for powder cocaine use and trafficking.

The researchers of the NIJ/PCL study worked in conjunction with NIJ’s Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program data collection effort, which regularly interviews and tests drug use among arrestees in cities across the United States. The study team obtained anonymous urine samples from arrestees at six sites in the first quarter of 1999. At each site, researchers interviewed participants and



Photo source: PhotoDisc

matched the interviews to the urine specimens using bar codes. Of the total 2,327 samples collected, 1,666 were from men and 661 from women.

The urine samples that were found to be positive for cocaine were tested further for two chemicals, anhydro-ecgonine methyl ester (AEME) and ecgonidine (ECD), which are byproducts of smoking cocaine (i.e., crack, the smokable form of cocaine). When crack is smoked, the two chemicals are produced and inhaled and can subsequently be detected in the user’s urine. The presence of either AEME or ECD in urine is an accurate indicator of recent crack use.

Following the initial round of screening, researchers first confirmed the cocaine positives using GC/MS (gas chromatography/mass spectrometry) and then further tested the cocaine-positive urine specimens for the two chemicals. AEME was found in 63 percent of the cocaine-positive samples; ECD was found in 74 percent of the samples. The

results of the tests on the cocaine-positive samples indicate that 28 percent of the 2,327 study participants had used crack. Prevalence of crack was greater among women (31 percent) than among men (27 percent). The crack use rate found through urine testing was substantially higher than the average rate of 15 percent (13 percent for men and 22 percent for women) obtained through self-reports.

The findings reinforce earlier research showing that crack use is common among arrestees and constitutes a significant proportion of their cocaine use. The data also support the hypothesis that arrestees do not consistently provide accurate self-reports.

Although the methodology needs further refining before large-scale testing can be implemented, the results are encouraging. The ability to distinguish between use of crack and powder cocaine will enable researchers to verify the accuracy of self-reports in specific populations (e.g., juveniles) and to better analyze

The ability to distinguish between use of crack and powder cocaine will enable researchers to verify the accuracy of self-reports in specific populations (e.g., juveniles) and to better analyze drug use trends in the effort to better understand why treatment fails and arrestees recidivate.

drug use trends in the effort to better understand why treatment fails and arrestees recidivate. In addition, improved data could help programs such as ADAM track the spread of crack in areas where the drug is not well established.

For more information, contact Natalie T. Lu, NIJ, 810 Seventh Street N.W., Washington, DC 20531, 202-616-5209, lun@ojp.usdoj.gov.

Responding to Emergencies Involving People with Mental Illness

Henry J. Steadman et al., "Police Response to Emotionally Disturbed Persons: Analyzing New Models of Police Interactions With the Mental Health System," Final report submitted to NIJ, grant number 96-IJ-CX-0082.

Police have had mixed success responding to situations involving people with mental illness. Poor police response has been blamed for inappropriate incarceration of

people with mental illness as well as for use of excessive force in these situations. Some jurisdictions are trying to improve how they handle mentally ill people by developing innovative "prebooking" diversion

programs that give police alternatives to arrest and enable police to directly refer mentally ill people to community-based treatment programs. Prebooking diversion programs often involve novel police training practices and collaboration with local consumer and family groups.

Henry Steadman and colleagues examined the effectiveness of two prebooking diversion programs: the Community Service Officer program in Birmingham, Alabama, which uses inhouse mental health specialists employed by the police department to handle incidents, and the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) in Memphis, Tennessee, which relies on sworn officers with specialized training in mental health issues. In addition, the researchers looked at a traditional mobile mental health crisis response team in Knoxville, Tennessee, where the police department coordinates with crisis teams from community mental health organizations to handle incidents.

How to Get At-A-Glance Materials

Materials are available at:

- NIJ's Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>, or
- NCJRS, puborder@ncjrs.org, 1-800-851-3420, P. O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000.

The summaries in this section are based on the following:

Research in Progress Seminars. At these seminars, scholars discuss their ongoing research and preliminary findings with an audience of researchers and criminal justice professionals. Sixty-minute VHS videotapes of the Research in Progress seminars are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 1-800-851-3420. Videotaped seminars are \$19 (\$24 in Canada and other countries).

NIJ Final Reports. These final submissions from NIJ grantees typically are available from NCJRS through interlibrary loan. In some cases, photocopies may be obtained for a fee. For information about these reports and possible fees, contact NCJRS.

NIJ Publications. Some of the information here is summarized from recent NIJ publications, which are available from the NIJ Web site or by contacting NCJRS. Refer to the documents' accession (ACN) or NCJ numbers.

Less Lethal Options

In April 2000, a Seattle man with a mental illness was shot and killed by a police officer. The man was brandishing a knife following a shoplifting incident. The resulting citizen outcry sparked both a community working group and a police task force to examine the use of less lethal weapons.

The Less Lethal Options Community Workgroup, which was composed of representatives of neighborhood and minority advisory councils, recommended that the Seattle Police Department take the following steps:

- Provide all patrol officers with 8-hour Crisis Intervention Team

(CIT) training, with refresher courses every 2 years. CIT officers have special training for dealing with people with mental illness who are involved in police incidents. The program is based on the successful model used in Memphis, Tennessee.

- Provide all sergeants and lieutenants with 40 hours of CIT training.
- Train officers in use of less lethal weapons (tasers and bean bags) either prior to or at the time of issuance of the weapons, with annual requalification.

The group noted that although implementing its proposals would help police deal more appropriately with the mentally ill, long-term policy solutions ultimately are needed.

The police task force made similar recommendations for additional CIT's and less lethal weapons training. Full adoption of its recommendations (budgeted at \$350,000 for the 2001–02 budget) would ensure that about 50 percent of the police force had some form of less lethal weapon or intervention option within a year of implementation.

Findings

The findings suggest that specialized programs can help keep people with mental illness out of jail as well as facilitate access to treatment. In more than half of the encounters across the three sites, mentally ill subjects were either transported or directly referred to treatment resources. In about a third of the encounters, officers were able to resolve the incident at the scene in a way that helped resolve the crisis and let subjects remain in the community. Just over 6 percent of the encounters resulted in arrest. The study found that quick response time is important: Long waits for specialized personnel discouraged other officers from using the programs.

Among the three sites, the Memphis CIT program received the most positive ratings from nonspecialized officers on the force. The researchers attribute the high ratings to several factors; for example, the program is police-based, and the city has a “police-friendly” mental health system that provides a dropoff site

with a no refusal policy. In addition, fellow officers know that they can rely on the CIT officers to handle crises, thereby relieving them of the need to spend significant amounts of downtime with subjects.

What Works

The researchers conclude that the specialized programs contribute to better outcomes for people with mental illness. They link program success to two main program elements:

A psychiatric triage or dropoff center. Having a center where police can take people who are experiencing a mental crisis reduces officer downtime and places the subject in the mental health system rather than the criminal justice system.

Community partnerships. The departments view their prebooking diversion programs as part of their community policing initiatives. The data convincingly point to collaborations among criminal

justice, mental health, and advocacy communities as a way of significantly reducing the use of jails to house people with mental illness.

The authors also say that further in-depth examination of the Memphis and Birmingham programs is needed. They state that it would be informative to study the differences between these two models as they relate to other communities, jurisdictions, and State laws. Lastly, they argue that diversion from incarceration is not the same as being linked effectively to integrated mental health services. They use these points to establish their overall conclusion that further work is needed to build on these innovative models.

For more information, contact Henry J. Steadman, Ph.D., Policy Research Associates, Inc., 262 Delaware Avenue, Delmar, NY 12054, 518-439-7415, hsteadman@prainc.com. Watch NIJ's Web page for a forthcoming Research in Brief report on this study.

Enter the Dragon: Inside Chinese Smuggling Organizations

NIJ Research in Progress Seminar, "Enter the Dragon: Inside Chinese Smuggling Organizations," Sheldon Zhang and Ko-lin Chin, grant number 99-IJ-CX-0028, available on videotape from NCJRS (NCJ 187077).

Illegal Chinese immigration has occurred for decades, but until recently it rarely received public attention except when the attempts ended in disaster. Today's trend toward organized Chinese alien smuggling, however, is raising considerable concern and is gaining a great deal of public attention.

Limited immigration into the United States and the increasing number of Chinese nationals who want to emigrate to the United States have created fertile ground for an organized underground market in human trafficking. The emerging market is growing swiftly due to a number of factors, including rapid



Photo source: PhotoDisc

economic growth in the Pacific Rim; greater commercial exchanges between countries; the proliferation of telecommunication devices; and easier travel between countries via air, land, and sea.

Sheldon Zhang of California State University at San Marcos presented preliminary observations from his research with Ko-lin Chin of Rutgers University on the Chinese alien

smuggling trade at a recent Research in Progress seminar at NIJ.

Their research involves collecting data in a systematic way for the first time from individuals directly involved in organizing and transporting Chinese nationals into the United States. Zhang and Chin gathered data from three sites: New York, Los Angeles, and Fuzhou, China.

Zhang and Chin named two challenges for law enforcement: (1) constructing effective strategies to combat smuggling entrepreneurs, and (2) preventing new crime groups from forming partnerships with the traditional crime societies.

The Nature of the Trade

The researchers found that Chinese human smuggling is vastly different from other racketeering activities in the Chinese community, such as extortion, gambling, or prostitution. Chinese alien smugglers, or *snake-heads*, are otherwise ordinary citizens—government officials, police officers, small business owners, housewives, handymen, masons, taxi drivers, massage parlor owners, fast food restaurant owners, and

Zhang and Chin named two challenges for law enforcement:

- (1) constructing effective strategies to combat smuggling entrepreneurs, and
- (2) preventing new crime groups from forming partnerships with the traditional crime societies.

fruit stand owners. They have family networks and strong social contacts that give them the opportunity to take part in human smuggling.

Zhang and Chin learned through interviews that no qualifications or training are needed to participate in the smuggling business; all a potential smuggler needs is a combination of proper connections, opportunities, and an entrepreneurial spirit. As a result, Chinese alien smuggling is dominated by small groups of loosely connected entrepreneurs in temporary alliances. Zhang and Chin use the term “task force” instead of “organized crime” to refer to these groups.

The unfixed and changing nature of Chinese alien smuggling organizations allows members to easily hide their operations from law enforcement. Yet, because smuggling rings usually involve a dyadic (one-on-one) business transaction, membership in rings is vulnerable to change, and the loss of even one member can lead to the collapse of an entire ring.

Recent Trends

Today’s Chinese smuggling rings use fewer fishing trawlers, and landings are likely to occur at peripheral locations, such as the Virgin Islands, Mariana Islands, and islands off the Canadian or Mexican coasts. Increasingly, smugglers transport their human cargo in container ships that can elude the U.S. Coast Guard and make interception on the high seas nearly impossible.

The use of air routes is also increasing as many smugglers are able to arrange legitimate business trips, tourist visas, or marriages with U.S. citizens for incoming immigrants. Other immigrants fly into Canada or Mexico and enter the United States from there, or simply stay in the United States by not making their



Photo source: PhotoDisc

international connections at the airport.

Zhang and Chin’s data show that among the subjects in the United States who actively participate in Chinese smuggling activities, 81 percent describe themselves as U.S. citizens or permanent residents. About 10 percent claim to be members of an organized crime group. The researchers estimate that the number of Chinese smuggled into the United States varies from 20,000 to 30,000 annually.

For more information, contact Sheldon Zhang at Department of Sociology, California State University at San Marcos, San Marcos, CA 92069-0001, 760-750-4162, xzhang@csusm.edu.

Breaking the Cycle of Drug Use and Crime

NIJ Research in Progress Seminar, “Reducing Drug Use and Crime Among Felony Defendants: Findings From the Evaluation of Breaking the Cycle,” Adele Harrell, grant number

97-IJ-CX-0013, available on videotape from NCJRS (NCJ 187076).

Drug-involved offenders have high crime rates, and decreasing their drug use so as to reduce their offending is a high priority. How can the criminal justice system decrease drug use among offenders? The Breaking the Cycle (BTC) intervention strategy has demonstrated success. BTC reduces offender drug use and crime by combining case management, drug testing, sanctions, and treatment.

Adele Harrell of the Urban Institute presented preliminary findings from an evaluation of the BTC program in Birmingham, Alabama, at a recent NIJ Research in Progress seminar. The evaluation compared drug use and crime among felony defendants enrolled in BTC to defendants not offered these services based on surveys and arrest records in the year following entry into the courts. The BTC program in Birmingham was funded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

How BTC Works

In Birmingham, defendants are admitted to the BTC program if they self-report or test positive for drug use or have been arrested on a drug felony charge. Assessment revealed that about 60 percent of these drug users met the diagnostic criteria for drug abuse or dependency. BTC responded with proven treatment practices. The most frequently recommended intervention was urine monitoring only. Outpatient treatment, residential treatment, and group treatment were recommended when needed. Offenders involved in the evaluation spent an average of 150 days in the program.

Results of Breaking the Cycle

No matter the offense, BTC clients were less likely than the comparison group to be arrested in the year after sample entry, which is when the offender became a part of the evaluation or the study, with white clients arrested for fewer new crimes than black clients.

The evaluation found that BTC clients were less likely than those in a comparison sample to self-report that they had committed a drug

crime in the 6 months before their followup interview. Results of statistical models suggest that with 16 percent of non-BTC offenders reported committing a drug offense, only 7 percent of comparable BTC participants would report such an offense.

For offenses other than drug selling, a large effect of BTC was found for whites but not for blacks. For whites, with 29 percent of non-BTC defendants reporting offenses other than drug selling, only eight percent of comparable white BTC participants would report such offenses. For black offenders, compared to 17 percent of non-BTC defendants reporting such offenses, 16 percent of BTC clients would also report such offenses.

While these initial findings are promising, Harrell pointed out that they are preliminary, limited to one site, and may have been affected by differences in the characteristics of defendants in the two samples. Additional research on the BTC model is being conducted in Eugene, Oregon; Jacksonville, Florida; and Tacoma, Washington.

For more information, contact Adele Harrell, The Urban Institute, State Policy Center, 2100 M Street N.W., Washington, DC 20037, 202-261-5738, aharrell@ui.urban.org.

Compstat and Organizational Change

NIJ Research in Progress Seminar, "Compstat and Organizational Change: Preliminary Findings From a National Study," David Weisburd, grant number 98-IJ-CX-0070, available on videotape from NCJRS (NCJ 186731).

Former New York Police Commissioner Bill Bratton introduced a new way of looking at crime problems in 1994. The process, called Compstat, used weekly meetings that featured statistics and automated mapping at which Bratton asked his deputies to identify emerging problems and to explain what they were doing to reduce crime.

Today Compstat has spread across the country. It combines mapping and analysis of data with other essential police performance measures to hold police managers accountable for their performance.

How far has Compstat spread, and has it changed the landscape of American policing? David Weisburd of the University of Maryland and Hebrew University Law School and his colleagues Stephen Mastrofski of George Mason University and Rosann Greenspan of the Police Foundation used surveys and site visits to establish a national profile of Compstat use, identify emerging patterns and variations in Compstat programs, and evaluate certain model programs in distinguishing how Compstat works at all levels in police organizations.

No matter the offense, BTC clients were less likely than the comparison group to be arrested in the year after sample entry, which is when the offender became a part of the evaluation or the study.

Weisburd discussed the findings and other preliminary observations at a Research in Progress seminar held at NIJ.

Research indicates that the larger a police department is, the more likely it is to have implemented a program like Compstat. Nearly 60 percent of departments with 500 or more sworn officers have a program, 33 percent of police departments with 100 or more sworn officers have an existing or planned Compstat program, and 11 percent of smaller departments have a program.

Why Compstat Has Spread

Large police departments began to adopt Compstat programs in 1996. The numbers continued to rise through 1998, though there is some evidence that the trend has begun to level off. The south has the highest occurrence of departments with Compstat-like processes, followed by departments in the west, northeast, and north-central regions.

Weisburd stated that unlike other recent innovations in American policing, Compstat does not challenge the traditional quasi-military model of police organization. In addition, Compstat allows police departments to adopt technological innovations in policing while reinforcing the traditional hierarchal structure of police agencies.

Compstat allows police departments to adopt technological innovations in policing while reinforcing the traditional hierarchal structure of police agencies.

Implementing Core Elements of Compstat

In his presentation of the research, Weisburd identified seven central elements of police management and discussed how Compstat affected each element. The elements are: (1) clarify the mission, (2) hold managers accountable, (3) use data to identify and assess problems, (4) use effective problem-solving tactics, (5) provide commanders with control over resources needed to get the job done, (6) ensure flexibility within the organization, and (7) make the department accountable externally.

Large departments implement the seven elements with varying degrees of effectiveness. Departments are more likely to use data-driven problem identification and assessment and to stress clarifying the mission, holding managers accountable, and ensuring flexibility within the organization. Compstat departments find it much more difficult to

implement effective problem-solving tactics and to develop systems of external accountability.

Compstat and non-Compstat departments differ significantly on the seven core elements. Compstat departments are more likely to claim implementation of each of these than are non-Compstat departments. Weisburd suggested that police departments, on the whole, have been more successful in implementing those aspects of Compstat that reinforce the established organizational structure of policing and—not surprisingly—less successful in adopting innovations that demand significant change in the philosophy and practices of policing.

For more information, contact David Weisburd at 2220 LeFrak Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, 301-405-4705, dweisburd@crim.umd.edu.